

July 26, 2007

**Statement of Congressman Pete Stark
Opposing Harmful Agri-business Subsidies**

MR. STARK: Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to continuation of a failed farm policy that takes from the poor to give to the rich. Although the Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) before us is being sold as a reform package, it is little more than a dressed up version of previous "Farm Bills" that have paid over \$1 billion to dead farmers and \$1.3 billion to individuals who do not farm.

Our so-called "farm policy" overwhelmingly benefits the wealthiest landowners at the expense of small farmers. The top 10% of recipients collect 60% of all payments, while 57% of farmers receive nothing. Large landowners receive the most subsidies, which allows them to purchase the best land from smaller farmers. This drives many farmers out of business and increases the price of land.

This bill does lower the income cap and prohibits individuals with more than \$1 million in annual income from receiving direct payments. Unfortunately, there are numerous loopholes in this provision, which led the Bush Administration's own Agriculture Department to estimate that as few as 3,000 out of the 1.5 million individuals receiving direct payments will be cut off. This bill therefore does little to end the corporate welfare that has become the hallmark of our agriculture policy.

Congressmen Kind and Flake are offering real reform. I support their Fairness in Farm and Food Policy Amendment because it creates a meaningful income limit to make sure no subsidies go to farmers with a yearly income over \$250,000. It gradually reduces direct payments and reforms the bloated crop insurance program. These savings are then invested into conservation, minority farmers, fruit and vegetable production, and a \$6 billion boost to vital nutrition programs. This is the new direction in which America's farm policy should be headed.

I applaud the efforts of my many colleagues who worked hard to include additional funding for

the Food Stamps program and the McGovern/Dole International Food program. Their efforts will help millions of hungry families in this country and around the world. However, this bill, does not go far enough to provide food for the hungry and looks to the wrong place to pay for the limited funding it does provide. If we are truly concerned about our nation's hungry and poor, we could stop subsidizing agri-business and put the money we recoup from eliminating current subsidies to feed our neighbors and support family farms.

I urge my colleagues to vote for meaningful reform, support the Kind/Flake amendment, and oppose the underlying bill.